Steps taken by Government to prevent criminalisation of politics

298. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps were taken by Government during and on the eve of recent General Elections to the Lok Sabha to prevent criminalisation of politics and criminals from entering the political fray; and

(b) what further steps have been or are being taken in the direction?

THE MINISITER OF STATE OF THE DEPTT. OF LEGAL AFFAIRS. LEGISLATIVE DEPTT. AND DEPTT. OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) The Election Commission by an Order dated 17.1.1996 had directed the State Governments/Union territory Administrations to undertake special drives to compile list of persons who had indulged in past in booth capturing; intimidation, impersonation etc.; to update the list of history-sheeters, declared absconders, fugitive criminals etc; to unearth illicit arms and ammunition; to unearth illicit liquor making factories etc. Further, any person who is convicted for any offence mentioned in section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 gets disqualified for such periods as are mentioned in that section.

(b) Certain measures are under consideration of the Government to curb electoral malpractices and criminalisation of the electoral process. These include enhancement in punishment of certain existing electoral offences, creation of certain new electoral offences, amplification of offence of booth capturing and making it more stringent in case offender is a government servant, reduction in compaign period etc. Use of photo identity cards and Electronic Voting Machines would also help in reducing electoral mal-practices.

Right of Franchise for Prisoners

299. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the All India Lawyers' Forum for Civil Liberties had appealed on the eve of recent elections to the Lok Sabha to ensure that over 2-5 million prisoners in different jails in the country are able to exercise their right of franchise; and

(b) if so, what arrangements were made for securing due exercise of their democratic right of franchise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPTT. OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPTT. AND DEPTT. OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Decline in Growth rate of Deposits and Credit of Commercial Banks

300. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the growth rate of deposits and credit of commercial banks declined during the financial year 1995-96;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) to what extent the bank credit declined;

(d) whether the growth in aggregate deposit moved down to 8% from 11.2% in the previous year; and

(e) if so, what steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that during the year 1995-96 (31st March 1995 to 29th March 1996) there was a decline in the rate of growth

of both aggregate deposits and bank credit as compared with the previous year. While the growth of aggregate deposits of scheduled commercial banks decelerated from 22.8 per cent (Rs. 71,726 crore) to 11.8 per cent (Rs. 45,486 crore), the growth of bank credit declined from 28.7 per cent (Rs. 47,143 crore) to 19.2 percent (Rs. 40,540 crore).

RBI have further reported that the growth rates of the banking variables are however, not strictly comparable as between 1994-95 and 1995-96. Firstly, there were 27 reporting fortnights in 1994-95 as against the usual 26 fortnights. Secondly, the last reporting Friday for 1994-95 coincided with March 31 and as such the year-end bulge was reflected in the banking data for 1994-95. The unduly inflated base of 1994-95 therefore got reflected in lower order for growth rates in 1995-96 than would have been the case otherwise.

As regards bank credit, RBI has stated that the food credit declined by 20.2 per cent (Rs. 2,483 crore) during in 1995-96 as against a rise of 12.5 per cent (Rs. 1,368 crore) in 1994-95. This decline could be attributed to lower stock of food grains, higher exports, and lower procurement during the year 1995-96. Non-food credit, on the other hand, increased by 21.6 per cent (Rs. 43,023 crore) on a high growth rate of 29.8 per cent (Rs. 45,776 crore) in 1994-95.

Continuing the process of interest rate deregulation and with a view to augmenting the resources of the banking system, the RBI has taken a series of policy measures since the second half of the year 1995-96. Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was reduced in phases from 15 per cent of Net Domestic Demand and time Liabilities (NDTL) to 12 per cent between November 11, 1995 to July 6, 1996. These measures have injected liquidity into the system which stimulates deposit growth as well. Other policy measure recently announced by Reserve Bank of India include shortening of minimum maturity from 46 days to 30 days and allowing banks freedom to determine deposits rates for maturity above one year, which is expected to have a favourable impact on deposit growth.

Foreign Exchange Violation by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd.

301. SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there was foreign exchange violation in the purchase of second-hand machinery by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. at Hardwar;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Central Bureau of Investigation has been asked to look not the matter; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case in the matter of purchase of second hand equipment by Bharat heavy Electricals Ltd. Hardwar, during 1989—92. Investigation under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act have also been made. However, no violation of the provisions of the above Act has been reported.

Setting up of New Offices/Branches by Reserve Bank of India

302. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India proposes to set up new offices/branches at important commercial and industrial centres of the country, particularly in the state of Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the places selected for this purpose;

(d) whether the land has been asked for/acquired to set up new offices; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir.